



GETTING STARTED IN EDUCATION PHILANTHROPY:

A Workbook to Identify Your Values, Interests and Goals

IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION: *A Guide for Donors to Make a Difference*

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GETTING STARTED IN EDUCATION PHILANTHROPY:

A Workbook to Identify Your Values, Interests and Goals

ABOUT THE WORKBOOK

This Workbook is designed to illuminate your interests and aspirations for working in education philanthropy. There are questions covering eight different aspects of giving:

Level of Change: At what level (or societal unit) will your philanthropy work? For example, will you support individuals, build strong organizations, or shape public policy?

Impact: What change do you want to help achieve through your philanthropy? What is the scope and scale of what you hope to accomplish?

Population: Is there a particular age range or special population whose success means a lot to you?

Organizations: What sorts of organizations or projects excite you? Which will advance the work you want to accomplish?

Inside vs. Outside: Will you work for change from inside or outside the education system?

Involvement: How will you give? Can you bring other, non-financial resources to the table?

Results: What are you trying to accomplish through your giving? What would you like to learn? How do you describe success in giving?

The questions are something of a hybrid, blending the closed format of a traditional multiple choice questionnaire with an open format that asks for your unprompted opinions. There is space to explore and record how you arrived at your answers, as well as examples to get you thinking.

We chose this format because we did not want to encourage (or discourage) you to “Choose one.” Different issue areas, approaches and populations are by no means mutually exclusive. For new philanthropists especially, making investments in a number of different areas can help clarify strategies and create learning opportunities. And if it’s done right, it all adds up to greater impact.

At the same time, however, we are not encouraging you to choose “All of the above.” Effective philanthropists must make thoughtful choices about what they invest in and what they don’t. Nobody has the money, time or influence to solve every problem.

Philanthropy is not a simple or mechanical process. These questions deliberately offer no direct links between your answers and particular investments, no “If you chose (a), give to _____.”

Instead, we follow each question or set of questions with *Considerations*. These are strategic factors – drawn from the experiences of individual donors and professional grantmaking staff – that relate to each of the aspects listed above. You may find yourself answering questions differently once you’ve reflected on them... or you may not.



1

SECTION

Level of Change

Deciding on a 'level of change' forces you to lay bare your assumptions about where the actions you fund will have the most impact.

Q: To improve student achievement, I believe that we should be concentrating our money, time and resources primarily on:

Students, because ...

- ... Without student motivation and aspiration, all the reforms in the world will not help them succeed.
- ... Every student has unique needs that must be met at a one-on-one level.
- ... Your reasons: _____

Teachers and principals, because ...

- ... Teachers have a direct and vast influence on student achievement.
- ... A good principal can lead a school to success – and change its students’ lives.
- ... Your reasons: _____

Schools, because ...

- ... They affect the lives of thousands of kids, but are a manageable enough “unit” to improve in a relatively short period.
- ... Schools inspire loyalty, teamwork and participation from students, families, teachers and local community members – and that gets things done.
- ... Your reasons: _____

School districts or charter/model school management organizations, because ...

- ... That’s where decisions get made, policies created and budgets allocated that affect our entire area.
- ... They are responsible for managing most of the components of what I consider a “quality education”: teacher quality, curriculum, facilities, etc.
- ... Your reasons: _____

Networks of supporters and community stakeholders, because ...

... Idea-sharing and coordination among people with different knowledge and resources helps drive progress more quickly and for more students.

... The public education system can learn a lot from other sectors and fields.

... Your reasons: _____

Public will and engagement, because ...

... All members of society should have a say in public education – their tax dollars support the system and they have a stake in the success of our future workforce and leaders.

... Without public influence and support, no lasting or significant reform can be achieved or sustained.

... Your reasons: _____

Government and policymakers, because ...

... I think most lasting changes in education come from the top down.

... Governments have control over the majority of public education dollars – and therefore control over district and school behavior.

... Your reasons: _____

Research and new ideas, because ...

... Until we understand the problems in the public education system, we can't create meaningful and successful solutions.

... The system needs new blood and fresh ideas.

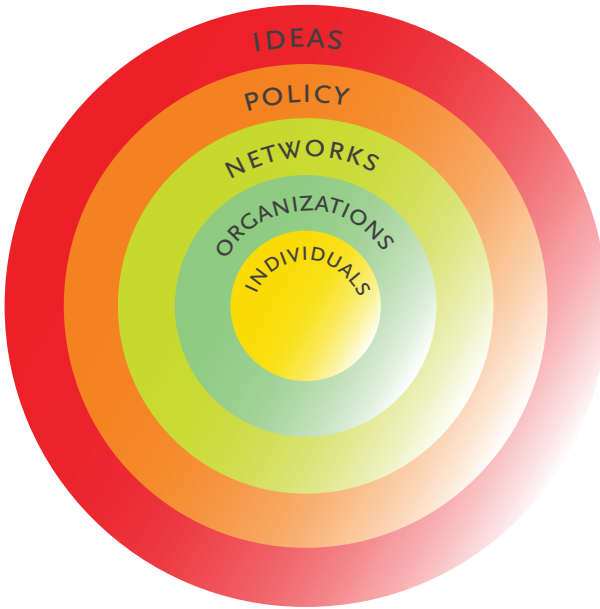
... Your reasons: _____

CONSIDERATIONS

Deciding on a “level of change” grounds all your other decision-making. It forces you to lay bare your assumptions about where the actions you fund will have the most impact.

A useful way to think about the levels of change in education is to imagine a series of five concentric circles:

Each circle represents a level of change:



Individuals: Support individual achievement (students), for example, through after-school tutoring or mentoring; or cultivate influential individuals (teachers or principals), for example, through professional development or new materials and tools

Organizations: Strengthen organizations (schools, school districts, or the organizations that work with them), for example, through strategic planning or organizational development

Networks: Connect individuals and organizations to share ideas and pursue joint action, for example, through convening groups and collaborations to craft joint strategies

Policy: Influence education policy (government and policymakers), for example, through advocacy or public-will-building

Ideas: Bring new ideas into play in the education field, for example, through research and support of “thought leaders”

As you radiate outward from the center to the outermost circle, you can make some generalizations about the change you’re looking to achieve:

You move from *direct* to *systemic* influence.

The potential *scale* of change – that is, the potential to impact a large number of people both now and in the future – increases.

The *time horizon* for change lengthens.

The immediate *cost* increases. (Funding research and thought leadership at the Ideas level is typically an exception to this.)

Your ability to *identify* your personal contribution as an essential factor in the change decreases.

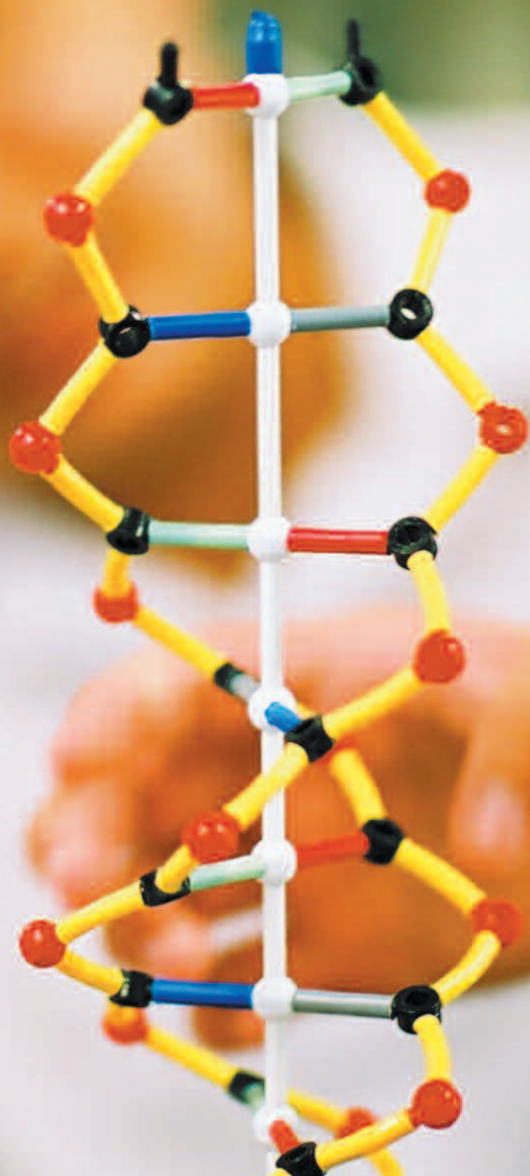
The *risk* that your grant won’t cause the change you thought it would increases.

No matter what level of change you pursue, keep in mind there are a number of avenues for investing both inside and outside the system. Say you want to help strengthen your local school district. You can make a gift directly to the district; to a nonprofit organization (for example, a local education fund) that works in partnership with the district to build capacity and attract new resources; or to a service provider (for example, a charter school management organization or a principal training program) that offers new or highly effective approaches to improve student learning.

Reflecting on the above, which levels of change would you like to support? Why?

high impact projects

DEAN & MARGARET LESHER FOUNDATION
EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION
THE JAQUELIN HUME FOUNDATION



Dean & Margaret Leshar Foundation

WALNUT CREEK, CA

ASSETS: \$41 million at the time of the initial grant, currently \$82 million

TOOL: Public/private partnership to fund computer technology in K-12 public schools

INITIAL GRANT: \$600,000 for three years

TOTAL INVESTMENT: \$1.97 million over nine years

Dean and Margaret Leshar established their family foundation in 1989 to help make their beloved home, Contra Costa County, a strong and vibrant community through support of quality education, diverse art programs, and healthy children and families. Four years later the foundation received its principal assets from Mr. Leshar's estate, and in 1994 family trustees hired their first (and for three years only) staff member, Executive Director Kathleen Odne.

Early in Odne's tenure the foundation was deluged with technology requests from individual schools in Contra Costa County's 18 schools districts. Without an extensive technology background, she decided to find a partner to help build and implement a small grants program that would assess requests based on the best practices of curriculum development and technology in classrooms.

"Finding the right partner was probably the most challenging part of creating the program," says Odne. "I talked with superintendents, school board members, educational consultants and technical consultants." When she met with the Contra Costa County Office of Education, however, she knew she had found the perfect partner. "They had a dedicated technology department and staff," recalls Odne, "so in addition to its obvious jurisdictional fit, the county brought great technical and curriculum expertise to the table." Together, the foundation and the county launched the County Technology Academy Grants program in 1997.

The program makes grants of up to \$7,500 to teachers in local public schools. Teachers apply in two-teacher teams and must demonstrate how they would use the proposed technology tool to meet a curriculum need. In addition to the grant, teachers receive training on using their technology.

Over time, Leshar and the county added two components to the program. "Disseminator" grants of up to \$8,000 allow previous technology recipients to share their curriculum innovation with other teachers via web-based resources. "Grade level" grants of up to \$12,000 are available to entire grade levels working on a project within their school. Now in its eleventh year, the foundation's technology grants program makes about 36 grants a year.

The Leshner Foundation made an initial three-year, \$600,000 commitment to the effort. Since then, the foundation has renewed the commitment twice, with a 4.5 year gift of \$740,000 in 1999 and a three-year gift of \$630,000 in 2004. These funds cover the teachers' grant requests as well as some salary and related costs for county staff to operate the program. The county contributes additional staff time for handling grant requests, evaluating proposals, doing outreach to school principals and training grant recipients. Each recipient school also provides a financial or in-kind match.

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

Asked what she feels are crucial elements of the County Technology Academy Grants program's success, Kathleen Odne named "the three L's":

Leverage. "With a staff of only two, we had to find a way to leverage not only the dollars, but the time. The hardest part was finding the right partner. We did that with the county – they had the expertise and resources to keep the program going. The process was time intensive for me in the beginning, but it's paid off."

Long-term funding. For a project to develop and demonstrate achievement, "you need to be thinking in five-year time frames" for funding. Although foundation leaders did not know at the beginning how long they would be supporting the program, they were prepared for a long-term investment. "We didn't realize how successful the project was until three or four years in, when we had a formal evaluation done."

Latitude. As the program progressed, "the County Office of Education was willing to change and so were we when either saw a way to strengthen the project. The reason we chose to work with the county was that it had the experts on staff – we needed to be willing to acknowledge their technical expertise and cede some control based on that."

Edward W. Hazen Foundation

NEW YORK, NY

ASSETS: \$30 million

TOOL: Synergistic grants for community organizing

INVESTMENT: \$495,000 since 1997

The Hazen Foundation had been funding a number of small parent and community groups in the Mississippi Delta when, in 1997, it made its first grant to Southern Echo, a Jackson-based organization that builds grassroots leadership and organizations among African-American and working class communities in rural Mississippi.

"Southern Echo was already acting as a fiscal conduit and technical assistance provider to these community groups individually," notes Lori Bezahler, Hazen's president and

former education program officer. “But it wanted to use that intermediary role to develop a statewide coalition that could impact local and state education policy debates.” An initial \$30,000 grant enabled Southern Echo to conduct a series of planning meetings of the Mississippi Education Working Group, an emerging coalition of constituency-led organizations in low-wealth communities. The meetings resulted in a set of shared principles and a concrete program of work for the Working Group and its members. As they began implementing their programs, Hazen continued to support individual members, making grants of \$5,000 to \$45,000 per year to six organizations.

“Members pursued their own local agendas with support from the Working Group while building power as a coalition to impact state level policy,” says Bezahler. “Often the first hurdle was to get parents to believe that change was even possible. They were products of these schools themselves and these families had experienced a multigenerational disinvestment in education. They educated them around everything from how districting affects school board elections to what an effective curriculum looks like ... they armed parents with a set of expectations for their children’s education that are reasonable and hold up under scrutiny.”

Bezahler can point to a number of victories that Hazen’s support helped secure. One she’s extremely proud of: Parents of children attending public schools have been elected to the school board in communities that Working Group members organized. In 2005, Southern Echo co-hosted a “Dismantling the Achievement Gap” conference with the Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Valley State University – an event to which Hazen contributed \$10,000. More than 300 stakeholders from eight southern states participated.

Bezahler feels that Hazen’s initial grant helped Southern Echo truly build momentum for its work in education. Likewise, Hazen’s experience with Southern Echo and the members of the Working Group informed the foundation’s grantmaking moving forward. For 2005-09, Hazen will provide targeted, sustained funding to certain past grantees and other education organizing groups in the Mississippi Delta and three other geographic areas.

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

Consider the size of the beneficiary. “\$30,000 goes a long way in a small community-based organization as opposed to an entire school district. For some of our grantees, that amount represents an entire salary,” points out Bezahler.

Understand the uses and limits of evaluation. “In our proposal process we ask for both process and impact outcomes so that groups can develop their capacity to articulate how they project their activities will lead to the changes they are looking for. The truth is, there are so many factors at work in social change and the science just isn’t there to show a causal link between organizing and change – you can show correlation, but not causation and so you look for those logical connections.”

The Jaquelin Hume Foundation

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

ASSETS: \$16 million

TOOL: Operating support for state-based think tanks

INVESTMENT: Approximately \$3.6 million over six years

When he established his foundation in 1962, Jaquelin Hume had a clear vision of what he wanted to promote: smaller government, free markets and citizenship – and educating young people about those concepts.

After his death in 1991, the foundation trustees managed grantmaking until 1998, when they hired Gisèle Huff as Executive Director. With a background in public policy, Huff helped the trustees hone in on K-12 education and specifically on advancing school reform through school choice because, Huff states simply, “we didn’t believe the dysfunctional public school system could be changed from within. We still don’t.”

In 1999, Huff went back to the trustees. “I said, ‘Look, the great majority of education decisions are made in the states, as they should be. We need to be supporting the people working at that level.’” A key grantmaking strategy emerged: funding state-based, free market think tanks to advocate for greater school choice.

Today the Hume Foundation allocates almost one-quarter of its policy portfolio (the portion of its grantmaking budget devoted to funding policy activities) – approximately \$600,000 per year – to state-based organizations throughout the U.S. working on issues such as charter schools, school vouchers and tax credits to offset private school tuition. The other three-quarters of the portfolio goes to comparable national organizations.

“These think tanks are providing the intellectual ammunition for the school choice movement,” says Huff. “They provide the research and analysis that underpin victories in court and state legislatures as well as the local context when collaborating with national allies.”

When you’re in policy, Huff says, “You’ve got to be persistent and consistent. You don’t support contradictory issues, and you don’t go away.” The foundation’s grantmaking exemplifies the approach. It makes 20-25 grants each year to state-based think tanks, and although most have one-year terms the foundation typically renews them. Most grantees have been in the portfolio since Hume began funding this arena in 2000. “And we don’t do projects – we fund operating support,” adds Huff. “Our grantees’ budgets are lean and mean. As long as their mission coincides with ours, I don’t worry that our money is being wasted.”

When they hired Huff, the foundation's trustees gave her a specific mandate to leverage other dollars. "They knew I had experience in fund development!" she laughs, then adds: "At least 30% of my time is spent collaborating with and bringing other funders to the table. For a grant to the Association of American Educators, for example, I've gotten equivalent matching grants from two foundations and numerous small grants that enabled it to get to another level."

On the challenges of working at the policy level, Huff comments: "People are so reluctant to go into policy, so frustrated at the pace of change ... but as far as I'm concerned, it's the only place for reformers to be if they want to have a long-term impact on how education is delivered in this country."

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

Take the long view for seeing results, especially when your goal is to change public systems or policies. "Public policy is a messy business," says Huff, "and it requires tenacity, patience and a long-range vision." Philanthropists – unlike politicians – have the luxury of being able to work on a problem for a long time, and not just between election cycles.

Provide general operating support. "Grantees are best able to decide where dollars are most effectively spent and need the flexibility to make those decisions."



2

SECTION

Impact

Strategies for change can range from tackling immediate needs at one extreme to generating new ideas and models at the other.

Q: Which statement best represents your feelings about who – or what – you want to affect through your education philanthropy:

I want to make a direct and lasting difference in the life of at least one student.

I want to help schools and the organizations that support them function better.

I want to be a part of creating and spreading new ideas and models that help kids succeed in school and life.

I want be a part of changing policies that affect the public school system.

Q: When I think about the geographic scale of my giving:

I want to make an impact at the local or regional level because ...

... It's important to me that I give back to my community and help make it stronger.

... I believe that change begins at the grassroots, with a groundswell of popular support.

... Your reasons: _____

I want to make an impact at the state level because ...

... A lot of decisions and policies that affect public education in my community are made at the state level, so that's where the action is.

... Changes to state policy or practice will affect a lot of children ... and it still feels like I have enough of a voice to make a difference.

... Your reasons: _____

I want to make an impact at the national level because ...

... I believe that change begins at the "grasstops," with elected officials and other influential voices on the national stage.

... Change at the national level will trickle down to all the states and local districts, affecting the largest number of students.

... Your reasons: _____

CONSIDERATIONS

The impact you want to make has a lot to do with the actions (and organizations) you choose to fund or otherwise buttress. A useful way to think about the universe of possible actions is to categorize them under various “strategies for change”:

By *tackling immediate needs*, your philanthropy can make a powerful difference in individual lives. Actions you might support under this strategy include a scholarship or mentorship program; before- and after-school tutoring and recreation programs; or direct donations to purchase art supplies or keep an athletic program in business.

By *building capacity* you improve the management and performance of institutions and systems and thus enable them to increase student achievement. Actions you might support are a district-wide strategic plan; professional development for teachers, school leaders or school board members; partnerships between schools and universities, community agencies or nonprofits; or connecting and organizing schools to share information or take action.

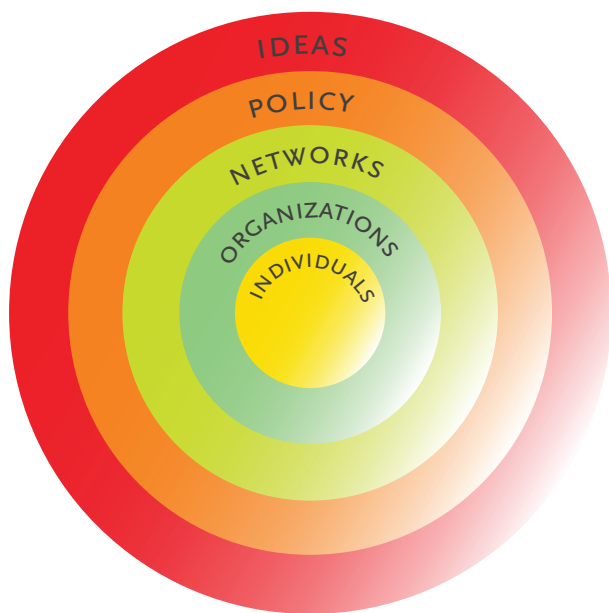
By *changing policy* you help shape the local, state and federal policies and funding priorities that have such enormous influence on public education. Actions you might support include grassroots organizing; advocacy for policy reform; social marketing to influence public opinion; or research that seeks to answer and thus influence pressing public policy questions.

By *generating new ideas and models* you bring new, potentially transforming ideas to the attention of the field. Actions you might support include demonstration programs; evaluation and dissemination of findings and best practices; original research or theory-building.

You’ll notice a correspondence between these strategies and the levels of change expressed in our concentric circle model (see next page).

As you radiate outward – from direct to systemic impact – the strategies move from service-oriented (*tackling immediate needs*) to infrastructure-oriented (*building capacity*) to policy-oriented (*changing policy*) to ideas-oriented (*generating new ideas and models*).

The geographic scale of your impact is another factor in the mix. To some extent, the level of change you choose to support may determine the



geographic scale of your work. For example, if you want to make a difference in *Policy*, working at the state or federal level may offer more opportunities for large-scale impact. (More key education policy decisions are made at the state than the federal level, although the No Child Left Behind Act has greatly expanded the federal focus. You can, of course, support policy change at the local level, since locally elected school boards control many educational decisions.) If you want to make a difference to *Individuals* or *Organizations*, you may find more opportunities plugging in locally.

Conversely, if a particular geographic scale is very important to you it could influence the level of change at which you work. For example, if giving locally gives you the greatest satisfaction, you may choose to work at the *Individuals*, *Organizations* or local *Networks* levels, supporting projects to improve local schools or school districts. If you want your contribution to have national impact, you may look to national *Networks*, *Policy* and *Ideas* as levels of change that can best accomplish that.

What strategies for change appeal to you? Why?

At which geographic scales do you want to work? What influenced your decision?



3

SECTION

Population

With so many populations in need, it's tempting to try to give to all of them. We urge you to resist spreading your resources too thinly – you risk diluting your contribution to such a degree that no one is better off for it.

Q: I'm most interested in helping students who are in:

Pre-kindergarten/school readiness programs, because ...

... Early physical, emotional, social and intellectual development are the foundations of future learning and academic success.

... Research shows that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs are the best intervention to level the educational playing field for disadvantaged kids.

... Your reasons: _____

Elementary (K-5) school, because ...

... These are fundamental, “make or break” years for preparing our children to succeed academically, socially and emotionally.

... This is the time when kids learn to read, which is the most important skill for succeeding academically.

... Your reasons: _____

Middle (grade 6-8) school because ...

... Middle-school aged kids have a special set of emotional, physical and social issues – both exciting and challenging – that schools need to address.

... Kids seem to lose some of their self-confidence and motivation to learn during the middle school years.

... Your reasons: _____

High school, because ...

... High school is the time when the heavy lifting is done to prepare students for the real world of college, work and the responsibilities of adulthood.

... There's a lot of potential for creativity, individual expression and alternative approaches to learning once children have “the basics” down.

... Your reasons: _____

Q: I'm especially interested in:

Students from low-income families, because ...

... Too many low-income students are educationally disadvantaged from the beginning due to unsafe neighborhoods and poorly financed school systems.

... Your reasons: _____

Students of color, because ...

... I believe that the playing field still is not level for people of color when it comes to educational opportunity.

... Your reasons: _____

Students with physical or learning disabilities, because ...

... Most of these students could really shine in school, but they're not getting enough resources to succeed.

... Your reasons: _____

Students from immigrant and refugee families, because ...

... The U.S. is becoming a more diverse country, and that means we need to do a better job of helping new immigrants assimilate and get a strong education.

... Your reasons: _____

High-potential, high-performing students, because ...

... These kids aren't being challenged enough in a typical school environment.

... Your reasons: _____

Non-traditional students (for example, drop-outs, push-outs, teen parents, homeless students), because ...

... When we can't help these kids, we're condemning them to narrow – and possibly unhealthy or dangerous – career and life choices.

... Your reasons: _____

Students in rural schools, because ...

... They get a lot less attention and money than urban schools, but the issues they face are just as real.

... Your reasons: _____

Other populations: _____

... Your reasons: _____

I'm not interested in a specific population ... I just want all kids to have the chance to achieve their potential.

CONSIDERATIONS

The need to improve student achievement and opportunity exists across the board. For whatever population is meaningful to you, there are opportunities to get involved at every “circle” of change (see page 6).

Let's say you're passionate about providing educational opportunities for students from low-income immigrant families. You can, for example, establish a scholarship program (*Individuals*) ... fund a school district's efforts to communicate more effectively with non-English speaking parents (*Organizations*) ... convene a group of educational and immigrants' rights organizations (*Networks*) ... support an organization that analyzes and shares data on the status of immigrant children (*Policy*) ... support a charter school for newcomers, or a project to test culturally relevant teaching strategies in a local school (*Ideas*).

With so many populations in need, it's tempting to try to give to all of them. We urge all funders to resist spreading your resources too thinly –

you risk diluting your contribution to such a degree that no one is better off for it. If your heart still pulls you in many directions, consider support for cross-cutting projects that will benefit a number of groups. If you're looking to help where the need is acute, consider these areas:

- Unequal skills and knowledge of children entering kindergarten, based on socioeconomic status and ethnicity.
- Achievement gaps between students of color and white students, and between low-income and non low-income students, including high school completion rates.
- Poor academic performance by minority-language / limited-English-proficiency students.
- Lack of resources for students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and other special needs.
- Stagnating student performance in most high schools (as opposed to elementary and middle schools, many of which are improving student achievement).

Explanations of why these conditions exist are multi-faceted and complex. They involve issues as material and technical as school financing, and as incalculable and immense as racism and poverty.

A discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of the IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION guide. However, our **Primer** booklet provides data about the performance of different student groups, while our **Resources** booklet will point you towards articles and websites for learning more about strategies for improving student achievement.

Which populations do you want to support? Which would you like to learn more about?

A young girl with dark hair in braids, wearing glasses and a light green camouflage t-shirt, is writing on a green chalkboard. An adult's hand, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a gold bracelet, points to the numbers on the board. The chalkboard has a vertical line and the numbers 3, 50, and 2 written on it. The girl is holding a piece of white chalk in her right hand.

high impact projects

THE GIRARD FOUNDATION
THE DONNELL-KAY FOUNDATION
EMILY HALL TREMAINE FOUNDATION

The Girard Foundation

SAN DIEGO, CA

ASSETS: \$19 million

TOOL: Improving management and accountability of charter schools

INITIAL GRANT: \$10,000

TOTAL INVESTMENT: \$610,000 over seven years

When Buzz Woolley established the Girard Foundation in 1986, he chose to focus on K-12 education in San Diego County, his home of more than 40 years. A retired venture capitalist and real estate developer, Woolley takes a decidedly business-like approach to his philanthropy, focusing the foundation's grantmaking on "areas where our investments can have the greatest leverage."

Developing high quality charter schools has become a major focus for the Girard Foundation. "Our board [which includes both family and outside members] believes we need alternatives for kids who are not getting a good education in traditional schools, and we think the foundation can stimulate improvements in the public school system through competition and innovative practices," says Woolley.

Over the years, the foundation has made a series of grants to create and support High Tech High, a nationally recognized, top-performing charter school in San Diego. Created by a coalition of educators and business leaders to prepare students for post-secondary education in high tech fields and the liberal arts, High Tech High's unique small-school model emphasizes project-based learning and application of classroom knowledge to adult-world challenges.

In 1998, the foundation gave school organizers a \$10,000 planning grant to prepare the charter proposal. On the strength of the proposal, the school subsequently received a \$3 million gift from Gary and Jeri Jacobs to construct its building. Then, in 1999, the foundation made a \$100,000 grant so the school could hire its first teachers and design the ninth- and tenth-grade curriculum. An additional \$100,000 was granted a year later to develop the upper grade curriculum.

The foundation made a somewhat unconventional grant in 2002 to help High Tech High and other charter schools "break out" from the jurisdiction of the school district's Special Education Local Plan Area, which provided services to special education students enrolled in charter schools. Explains foundation Executive Director Susan Wolking, "The schools were paying a tremendous amount into the system and weren't getting the services they needed. We gave them funding to create a legal entity under which they could move to a different system." When the first effort to change systems didn't work out, Girard made an additional grant that enabled the charter schools to try

a second idea. In the first year under its new arrangement, High Tech High reported a savings of \$1.6 million – “not a bad return on investment for Girard, which invested a total of \$125,000 in the effort,” says Wolking.

Girard’s support for High Tech High has continued. In late 2002, it made a \$50,000 grant to help it become the first charter school in the state (and possibly the nation) to credential its own teachers. Most recently, Girard made a multi-year commitment to High Tech High Learning, the charter management organization that will provide centralized operational support to individual charter schools throughout the state modeled on the original San Diego campus.

Since its inception, High Tech High has garnered substantial support from a variety of other funders, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has funded adaptations of the model around the country. Still, the Girard Foundation’s early and relatively modest contributions have been essential to the school’s success. According to Jed Wallace, High Tech High Learning’s chief operating officer: “Girard Foundation has been there at just the right time with key strategic investments that helped us move further faster.”

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Philanthropy can pay for things – and take risks – that government cannot.** “The project to help High Tech High with its special education costs was not your typical grant and it was a risky investment. In fact, the charter schools’ first effort to create a new arrangement didn’t work out,” says Wolking. “But in the end, we had clear evidence that we made a difference.”
2. **Look for the right opportunity at the right time to strengthen an organization’s work.** “Each of our grants to High Tech High has come at a key moment in the school’s development. It’s a very tactical way for us to use a relatively small grant to help bring a school or organization to that next level.”

The Donnell-Kay Foundation

DENVER, CO

ASSETS: \$30 million

TOOLS: Research to inform public policy questions, coalition-building

INVESTMENT: \$50,000 over 18 months, plus staff time

“We operate more like a think tank with money,” says Executive Director Tony Lewis of the Donnell-Kay Foundation, which distributes between \$800,000 - \$1 million annually to support school reform and state level education policy in Colorado.

“Our trustees [five members of the family] made a conscious decision that given its limited financial resources, the foundation’s real value lay in our ability to generate dialogue and critical thinking.” They deploy the foundation’s small staff accordingly. “We don’t spend our time reviewing proposals,” says Lewis.

Instead, the foundation initiates projects like Colorado’s Schoolhouses. Over 18 months it invested about \$50,000 – plus a near-full-time project director – to examine the condition and funding of Colorado school buildings. The foundation conducted an online survey of superintendents in all Colorado districts, then hired a consulting firm to complete a rigorous assessment of seven school districts, one in each congressional district. The foundation organized a statewide media campaign about the findings, including stories tailored to local media in each congressional district. Says Lewis, “We had done a voter survey in 2003 which indicated that people were aware that school buildings were in terrible shape, but they weren’t wholeheartedly behind the idea of raising taxes to fix the problem. We did a second survey in 2005, after that media blitz. It showed not only more awareness, but more willingness to help.”

So the question became, how to fix it? While paying for school buildings has traditionally been the responsibility of local school districts, Lewis became convinced that a state fund – one that matched local monies at different ratios depending on districts’ tax bases – was the best way to ensure that low-wealth communities were not left out in the cold.

Lewis created a statewide coalition of education associations and grassroots groups who supported the idea. Lewis then approached the Colorado Oil and Gas Association and Colorado Petroleum Association with the idea of raising the state oil and gas severance tax, which could pour \$100 to \$200 million per year into such a fund.

After months of facilitating talks between the two interests, the foundation brokered a real victory – at least one oil and gas association would support the severance tax increase. “They liked the concept of a state school building fund because it’s tangible and they’ll see the impact,” Lewis says. “Of course, they also liked the idea of getting credit, and escaping the wrath of the environment and education activists!”

The coalition is drafting legislative language and intends to put an initiative on the state ballot in November 2006. (Since private foundations submit to certain restrictions on advocacy and lobbying, the foundation is not funding or involved in this work.)

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Use your credibility.** “We were first approached about the severance tax idea by an individual in the education community. He had proposed the idea to the oil and gas associations but couldn’t get any traction,” recalls Lewis. “We were able to succeed because we were seen as nonpartisan ... Basically, I exercised my ability to call people and have them return my calls.”

2. **Accept risk.** “Getting a new statewide program would be an extraordinary outcome of the Colorado Schoolhouses project.... but we have no idea whether the voters will go for it. Regardless of the election result, using research, media and facilitation to generate solutions is a worthwhile use of our money and time.”

Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation

MERIDEN, CT

ASSETS: \$75 million at time of initial investment, currently \$90 million

TOOL: Social marketing to influence public opinion

INVESTMENT: \$12 million over 10 years

For the Tremaine Foundation, promoting early intervention to address learning disabilities is a personal cause. Burton Tremaine Jr., son of the founders and first chair of the board, had dyslexia. So do his sons Tony and John, who today sit on the board along with other grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Emily Hall and Burton Tremaine Sr.

In the early 1990s, then President Sally Bowles worked with the board on a bold idea: creating and funding a multi-year national public awareness campaign on learning disabilities. “She’d been talking to major players in the field,” explains current President (and de facto program officer for this issue area) Stewart Hudson, who joined the foundation in 2001. “What she heard was a need to change the way the general public perceived learning disabilities.”

“Our ultimate goal was for more parents to seek help sooner for their learning-disabled children,” says board member Tony Tremaine. “And taking away the stigma is a big part of making parents more comfortable taking that step.” He adds with a laugh, “Apparently the board has a long attention span, because the campaign ended up lasting 10 years!”

In the early years of the initiative, Bowles brought together organizations that had never collaborated before – national organizations such as the Learning Disabilities Association of America, the International Dyslexia Association and the National Center for Learning Disabilities – to create the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities. The cornerstone of the campaign strategy was working with two partners who could help disseminate the message: the Communications Consortium Media Center and the Ad Council of America.

Over the course of the initiative, the foundation made \$4.5 million in grants to the Media Center, which provided communications expertise such as helping craft messages, finding earned media opportunities, publicizing the campaign and acting as intermediary with the Ad Council. The Ad Council, which received about \$2.5 million

directly from the foundation, produced public service announcements (PSAs) for television, radio and print.

Hudson estimates that the PSAs generated over \$250 million of free media placements, “a good return on investment for a campaign whose annual cost was between \$500,000 and \$1 million.” Another return was the relationships Tremaine built with other foundations. A particularly fruitful partnership emerged with the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation: the two foundations subsequently partnered as lead funders of All Kinds of Minds, a leading organization in the field of new approaches to teaching children who struggle to learn.

And what about the greatest return of all – a change in attitudes and behaviors? Hudson is sanguine but realistic. “We did polls every four years and for the most part they moved in a positive direction. But with public awareness you can’t always tie funding directly to outcomes. Our board is savvy about that. They were confident in the partners, they knew the work was good and they’ve seen the change occur. That’s enough for them.”

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Know how you want things to end before you begin.** “Part of beginning a new grantmaking effort is to define how you might want things to look by the time your grantmaking ends,” counsels Hudson. “Even if the vision of your end-game changes – and it will – it is a useful landmark for making course corrections during a multi-year effort.”
2. **Leverage your own grants by engaging other funders – both their experience and dollars.** “The learning, collegiality and knowledge you gain from other funders is critical – even more so than the getting additional dollars into the game. The collaboration between Tremaine and the Schwab Foundation is a great example, and there are many others that have emerged from our work on this issue.”



4 SECTION

Organizations

Public dollars are spent conservatively; they don't typically go to riskier ventures or programs without a long track record. This creates a real opportunity for philanthropy.

Q: Which statement best represents your feeling about the stage of organizations or projects you give to:

Giving to organizations or projects that have already demonstrated success is the best use of my money.

I'm willing to give to new, untested projects or organizations if I have confidence in their leaders' ability to succeed.

I'm interested in giving to new, untested projects or organizations whose innovation and potential for impact intrigue me.

I like a balance – giving some money to established organizations and some to start-ups.

Giving to intermediaries – leaders and experts who understand the field – is more efficient than my trying to figure out where my money is best spent.

CONSIDERATIONS

Some donors get great satisfaction from making targeted gifts that meet specific, immediate needs. Those who fall into this category are in a sense lucky – even with a limited amount of money, they can always find projects where they know their dollars will make a difference.

Those who aim for larger-scale impact can feel at a disadvantage because they don't have the money to support large, long-term ventures. But even small donors can make big change – especially if they're willing to try something new. One of the most powerful ways to do this is by helping test and spread new ideas, knowledge and models. Ways to do this include grantmaking for:

Pilot and demonstration programs, such as a new “PK-3” model that integrates standards, curriculum and assessment from pre-kindergarten through the elementary grades to ensure high-quality teaching during the first years of school; a principal-identified school improvement strategy in a local middle school; or a new charter high school with an alternative school-day model and curriculum. (Many national funders who sponsor demonstrations require “match” grants from local foundations and donors.)

Evaluations of demonstration programs or strategies for improving education.

Replication of successful programs in new locations.

Original **research** and **theory-building**.

Publication and **dissemination** of evaluations and research.

Organizations that use new knowledge to build public will and **advocate** for policy change.

You'll notice that most of these actions fall in the **Ideas** circle in our Level of Change illustration (see page 6).

Public dollars are spent conservatively; they don't typically go to riskier ventures or programs without a long track record. This creates a real opportunity for philanthropy to bet on up-and-coming leaders and emerging solutions.

Sometimes the gamble doesn't appear to pay off. The school improvement strategy doesn't result in higher test scores. The charter high school doesn't send more kids to college than the traditional school down the street. We say "appear to" because what the education field learns from such failures can be as useful as learning from a successful project. Only you can decide how comfortable you are with experimentation, and where you fall on the axis of risk versus potential reward.

Of course, there are compelling reasons to support established, proven entities as well. There are hundreds of organizations whose ability to do great work is grounded in their years of experience, expertise, relationship-building and visibility. Often these organizations struggle against the phenomenon of "donor fatigue" or donors jumping to fund the next new thing. Because many donors want to support particular projects or programs within these organizations, agencies grapple constantly with the challenge of meeting core operating expenses.

What kinds of organizations are you most comfortable supporting? Do you want to invest in generating new models and ideas? How will you feel if they aren't successful?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand raised high in the air, palm facing forward. The hand is in sharp focus, while the background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a large gathering or event. The lighting is warm, and the overall mood is one of participation or celebration.

high impact projects

THE PEPPERCORN FOUNDATION
THE A.L. MAILMAN FOUNDATION
J.F. MADDOX FOUNDATION

The Peppercorn Foundation

SEATTLE, WA & TAMPA, FL

ASSETS: \$4.9 million

TOOL: Grants to networks pursuing state-based advocacy

INVESTMENT: Eight - 10 grants per year totaling \$400,000

In 1999, Alan Rabinowitz decided to honor the lifework of his wife Andrea Rabinowitz, a dedicated child therapist. Together, they established the Peppercorn Foundation and its mission to support early education and care organizations that work with children and families most impacted by poverty and racism. “We care deeply about the need for advocacy that supports programs and policies, that address the barriers low-income children and families must overcome to gain access to high-quality early learning opportunities,” notes Alan, author of the first treatise on social change philanthropy, *Social Change Philanthropy in America*, written in 1990.

Andrea adds, “Funds for early childhood education programs for children and their families help to overcome the negative impacts of race and class, which prevent them from reaching their full potential. This reality is at the core of our grantmaking mission.”

In 2000, Andrea, Alan and two outside trustees hired Ada Sanchez, experienced in issues of education and grantmaking, to act as the executive director of the foundation. According to Alan, “We knew we would be involved trustees, but we wanted someone who was in the field and could identify exciting and relevant organizations and projects around the country.”

As Sanchez explains, “Because of severe state and federal budget cuts for anti-poverty and education programs, we need collaborative, organized advocacy campaigns for both increased federal dollars and for maintenance of government programs and agencies that provide essential services for families and children.” For the Peppercorn Foundation, this interest translates into funding a variety of local, state and national advocacy efforts that seek to change public will and maximize resource allocation. Peppercorn-funded advocacy efforts have focused on changes to regressive tax laws, referendum initiatives, legal interventions and media campaigns.

The Rabinowitzes realize that developing and sustaining long-term partnerships with grantees is of the utmost importance for long-term success. Based on this philosophy, their foundation often provides several years of funding to particular grantees, either through multi-year grants or by renewing grants over multiple years. “Although we are a small foundation, our grant size usually falls in the \$40,000-\$50,000 range. Rather than providing a number of small grants to a larger number of organizations, we have chosen to award larger grants to eight-10 organizations a year. This approach allows us

to be a good partner and award grants to build capacity and for general operating support,” states Sanchez.

Two grantees involved in statewide advocacy and budget-oriented policy work that exemplify this funding strategy are the Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama and the Mississippi Low Income Childcare Initiative. Both organizations are comprised of hundreds of child care centers, home providers, early childhood educators, parents and child care advocates dedicated to working together to enhance the quality of care and education for poor children and families.

“Of necessity, in addition to their ongoing work, both these grantees increasingly have had to engage in major advocacy strategies to oppose some of the worst spending cuts, tax bills and referendums. If these organizations, working in some of the most impoverished communities in America, are unable to raise the funds they need for these additional policy-oriented advocacy campaigns, there is a great likelihood that conditions faced by the families and children they serve will continue to worsen,” explains Sanchez.

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Since the public education system is a public enterprise, supporting grantees’ efforts to change public opinion or influence public policy may yield great impact.** “Organizations working on early childhood education and care in low-income communities need operational, capacity-oriented grants as well as funds for advocacy-oriented policy work that includes budget advocacy training and leadership development. Messaging and media strategies are also vitally important,” says Sanchez.
2. **Consider finding exceptional nonprofits already doing great work and then help them strengthen their capacity and efforts.** “In our experience, long-term partnerships that provide plenty of opportunity for dialogue, interaction, hands-on site visits and collaborative strategizing have proven successful not only for grantees, but for our own learning and growth as a foundation.”

The A.L. Mailman Foundation

WHITE PLAINS, NY

ASSETS: \$22 million

TOOL: Grants to build infrastructure for improving the quality of early education

INVESTMENT: Two grants totaling \$84,500

Brothers Abraham and Joseph Mailman established the Mailman Foundation in 1943. Shortly before Abe Mailman’s death in 1980, the brothers divided their assets so that

each of their families could establish its own philanthropic traditions. “Abe asked my mother what the successor foundation’s focus should be,” says Patty Lieberman, Abe Mailman’s granddaughter and current chair of the A.L. Mailman Foundation. “She told him that focusing on young children was a way for the foundation to achieve one of Abe’s own goals – to bring forth the best in every individual.”

Abe’s daughter, Dr. Marilyn Mailman Segal, knew of what she spoke. A professor of early childhood development, child advocate, parent educator and founder of the first Head Start program in Broward County (Florida), Segal was the foundation’s first chair and remains its chair emeritus. Under her guidance, the Mailman Foundation became a nationally recognized funder in the areas of childcare and early education, with grants supporting a range of strategies including research, policy analysis, advocacy training, demonstration projects, dissemination of best practices and curriculum development.

Professional development of childcare workers and early childhood educators is an area of particular importance to the foundation. “A diverse, well-trained and culturally competent workforce is crucial,” says Lieberman. “To achieve that, we need to strengthen the infrastructure of professional development.”

Asked to name a professional development grant she felt was highly leveraged, Program Officer Joelle Fontaine replies, “With an average grant size from us of \$20,000 - \$50,000, the foundation encourages all applicants to leverage additional funding!”

The foundation’s relationship with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – the country’s leading organization for early childhood professionals – dates back to the mid-1980s, when it provided early support to develop a national accreditation system for early childhood programs, which remains the only nationwide gauge of quality for early education providers. Twenty years later, in 2002, Mailman made a \$50,000 grant to NAEYC to develop a communications campaign to explain the association’s newly revised accreditation system to its nearly 100,000 members. Currently there are more than 10,000 NAEYC-accredited programs across the country serving nearly one million children and their families.

In 2004, the foundation made another grant to NAEYC: \$34,500 to help launch a new national accreditation system to recognize high-quality college associate degree programs for preparing early childhood educators. “Having been involved in the organization’s original accreditation process, funding the associate degree program represented a logical next step in NAEYC’s development and was tremendously satisfying for us,” says Fontaine. “It gave us a real sense of progress, of building connections between what colleges are teaching and what early childhood educators need to know.” In fall 2006, NAEYC’s first cohort of 60 community colleges will undergo the accreditation process.

“While we were not the largest funder of this project, we were the first. NAEYC reported they were able to leverage close to \$200,000 on the strength of our \$34,500 grant,”

reports Fontaine. “We’re well respected in the early childhood community, and grantees have often indicated that funding from the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation is viewed as a ‘stamp of approval’ for other funders.”

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

Be flexible and nimble, responding to the changing needs of the field: “While working with a clear mission, the foundation prides itself in being responsive to the needs of the field. We routinely scan the field to learn about emerging policies and practices,” reports Fontaine.

Stay the course – change takes time: “We believe in the importance of this work and the need to support small incremental changes over time.”

J.F. Maddox Foundation

HOBBS, NM

ASSETS: \$90 million at time of initial investment, currently \$180 million
TOOL: District-wide curriculum planning and implementation
INVESTMENT: \$7.4 million over 10 years

In 1996, the J.F. Maddox Foundation’s trustees elected to develop a grant strategy aimed at achieving reform within the public education system in Hobbs, New Mexico. They had been advised by other foundations against working within public education, because of the difficulty of achieving measurable or lasting results. Nonetheless, the board decided the negative consequences of not getting involved were greater than the perceived risks of a new major initiative.

Trustees empowered the foundation’s small staff to develop an initiative aimed at improving student performance in the only school district in town. Hobbs, a town of about 28,000 in rural New Mexico, had experienced nearly two decades of economic downturn and a significant demographic shift. The school district is last in the state in terms of per-pupil funding levels.

Staff went to work studying academic papers, consulting with other funders and observing and interviewing educators in high-performing schools throughout the country. They identified three success factors critical to improving student achievement: a rigorous, coherent curriculum; well-planned teacher development; and an educational environment in which learning is celebrated and rewarded.

At the same time, staff began to lay the groundwork to work closely with the local school district. Having observed many unsuccessful “top-down” reforms, the foundation was

determined to achieve meaningful buy-in from local educators. Using a series of small grants to build relationships and open a dialogue, the foundation won the trust of the school board and district administration – so much so that the superintendent began to refer to the foundation as a source of research and development in terms of approaches to educational reform. Teachers also were sought out, with the foundation funding their site visits to learn from high-achieving schools.

Using the foundation's three success factors as criteria, the district eventually selected two curriculum-driven initiatives, one for elementary education and another for secondary education. Maddox committed five years of funding for the former and 10 years for the latter, with funds supporting teacher and principal training, teacher planning time, instructional materials, a communications program, and financial incentives for teachers and students. Funding commitments for both initiatives ended in 2005.

The Foundation views the results as extremely promising. The new instructional approaches were implemented across all subject areas, and most performance benchmarks were achieved. Today, 55 percent of all high school students in Hobbs are taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and AP scores, which rose precipitously in the early years of the initiative, have remained level despite the growing influx of disadvantaged and limited-English-proficiency students.

When the Foundation first began supporting the two initiatives, grant support was about \$1 million a year – roughly 2% of the district's budget. Funding decreased with each year so that the district would progressively assume new costs within its operating budget. Today the district operates the initiatives with only \$100,000 in annual foundation funding – and it is clear that the content and culture of public education is significantly changed in Hobbs.

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Planning for change is indispensable.** In studying failed initiatives, foundation staff saw a lot of money for implementation but little for planning. The Maddox Foundation spent about 10 percent of its total initiative budget on planning and development, and it was invaluable. The superintendent later said it provided the intellectual discipline that most districts were lacking.
2. **Upfront buy-in and participation by grantees is key.** Engaging teachers and other 'front-liners' in bottom-up planning was key. One of the foundation's greatest roles was asking tough questions and requiring educators to go through a process to test and validate their ideas. Maddox kept them coming back by asking for analyses of their challenges and changes in strategy, and rewarding them for their candor.



5

SECTION

Inside vs. Outside

We believe there is vast space for donors to generate solutions both inside and outside the system.

Q: I think my money will be used to best effect if I invest it in:

Schools, school districts, and organizations that work directly with them, because ...

- ... Those closest to the teaching and learning process have the best idea of where the problems lie, and how to solve them.
- ... We can't demand accountability from schools and districts without giving them authority to make change.
- ... Most schools and districts are on the right track – they just don't have the resources or organizational capacity to do what they need to do.
- ... Your reasons: _____

Organizations that work outside the education system, because ...

- ... The public education system and those who run it are stuck – they need creative ideas, perspectives and expertise from other sectors like business.
- ... They are less hampered by restrictions or bureaucracy so can be more flexible and efficient.
- ... The public education system needs more “outsiders” in the general public advocating for them.
- ... Your reasons: _____

CONSIDERATIONS

The debate is ongoing about whether change in public education is best pursued inside the school system (broadly speaking, by working within or in support of schools and school districts) or outside the system (broadly speaking, by developing and incubating new models and ideas outside of the education system). We don't presume to have the answer. In fact, we don't think there is any one answer – each approach has its strengths and limitations. We do believe there is vast space for donors to generate solutions both inside and outside the system.

A discussion of the pros and cons of each approach is beyond the scope of this book. (The **Resources** booklet can point you in the direction of some key readings on the subject.) We can offer what we feel are fair generalizations, to get you thinking:

Most people who choose to work inside the system make an assumption that the system is fundamentally workable, and that change is both possible and preferable from within – because at the end of the day, that’s where most of the students are. For them, the main issue is one of capacity – of improving the way established institutions and processes work.

Examples of working inside the system include helping teachers strengthen or develop new skills, supporting a district superintendent’s reform strategy or an outside audit of a district’s operations, or underwriting the costs for new technology or systems that can improve system performance (such as tools for tracking and sharing student performance data).

Working inside the system is inherently complicated. Change can be hard to make and take a very long time. The tradeoff is that when change does come it is often large-scale and sustainable: it can impact hundreds of thousands of students for years to come.

Many who choose to work outside the system do so on the assumption that innovation and change are difficult – even prohibitively so – within a complex and bureaucratic public system. They aim to create new models or schools unencumbered by the system’s inherent complications. Their assumption is that outside work can still effect large-scale change by putting external pressure on the system to improve.

Examples of working outside the system include funding nonprofits that are incubating new ways of delivering services or learning, supporting the creation or operation of individual charter schools, or encouraging grassroots organizing that brings community pressure to bear on a problem. We should note here that organizations working outside the system often must find ways to collaborate with those on the inside to deliver programs or services.

Working outside the system can produce relatively quick, measurable, positive results. A new charter school might demonstrate improvements in student performance after just a few years. Ten years on, there may be a national network of 20 or 50 such schools. The tradeoff is that these outcomes impact far fewer students than a system-wide improvement.

What excites you more, the idea of working inside the system, outside the system, or both? Why?



6

SECTION

Involvement

Take advantage of non-financial assets for maximizing your impact.

Q: What makes me feel best about giving is:

I'm making a difference in my community, today.

I'm helping individuals live a better life.

I'm helping make change that will impact future generations.

Q: I have the ability to give _____ away to public education over the next five years:

under \$125,000

\$125,000 - \$500,000

\$500,000-1,000,000

\$1,000,000 - \$5,000,000

Over \$5,000,000

Within that five years, I prefer to spend that money on:

Smaller contributions to a number of different organizations

Fewer, but larger and longer-term gifts

Q: If I were to volunteer my time or expertise, I'd be most excited to:

Work directly with students in the schools.

Use my professional skills to consult with and help strengthen schools, districts, or organizations that work with them.

Educate myself more about issues in the education system, and share what I learn with colleagues.

Learn how to use my influence to impact education policy or public will.

Fundraise and/or convene other philanthropists to jointly support projects.

Run for school board.

Take a seat on the board of directors for an education-focused organization.

Other: _____

CONSIDERATIONS

There is no magic formula for how much it costs to pursue a certain strategy or have lasting effect on a particular level of change. It is fair to say that the larger the scale and the more systemic the change you want to achieve, the more money it's going to take up front, and the longer the time frame for change will be.

You may never be the primary source of funding for all the actions necessary to achieve your vision of change. This doesn't mean that "outer circles" like *Policy* – on our illustration of Levels of Change (see page 6) – are closed to you.

It does mean that you'll need to take advantage of your non-financial assets. As a philanthropist you have a variety of methods for maximizing your impact:

Leveraging: Using an initial investment to bring other resources into play.

Collaborating: Actively seeking partners to co-invest in a project or pool resources into a larger pot.

Convening: Bringing together different sectors of the community with a common concern.

Analyzing, defining and redefining issues: Financing research, analysis, theory-building, conferences or seminars on educational issues.

Advocating: Influencing public will and policy by speaking out on the issues, or funding those who do.

Another thing to consider here is time. Certainly there are examples of philanthropists making an immediate and positive impact: you fund a scholarship and a promising low-income student can attend the college of her choice.

But the truth is that in public education change can take months, years or even generations. If you want to contribute to large-scale systemic improvements, you need to be prepared to invest over time. You also need to find satisfaction in the process and in incremental progress towards your goal ... not necessarily in its swift achievement.

Besides "funder," what roles might you like to play in improving public education?

high impact projects

BEN SLIVKA
SCOTT PEARSON
STRATEGIC GRANT PARTNERS

$$12 \div 2 = 6$$

$$12 \div 6 = 2$$

$$6 \times 2 = 12$$

$$2 \times 6 = 12$$

Ben Slivka

SEATTLE, WA

TOOL: Technical assistance and grants through Social Venture Partners-Seattle
INVESTMENT: 100 hours and \$160,000 over three years

Ben Slivka and his wife Lisa Wissner-Slivka worked at Microsoft during the “go-go” years of the 1980s and 1990s. They both came from modest backgrounds with little exposure to philanthropy. But when a block of stock options were expiring in 1997, the proceeds encouraged them to pursue philanthropy more actively.

They established the Wissner-Slivka Foundation in 1997 and chose to focus their giving on education. Slivka notes, “Education made the difference for Lisa and me, allowing us to pursue successful careers in software.”

In early 1998 they joined Social Venture Partners (SVP)-Seattle, which brings together professionals looking for ways to invest money and skills in nonprofit organizations. “SVP offered a way to learn about philanthropy and the nonprofit sector hands-on,” says Slivka. “And its model of building nonprofit capacity to get to scale was appealing.”

Wissner-Slivka was the first to get actively involved, serving on one of SVP’s grantmaking committees and subsequently on its Refunding Committee, which reviews renewal grants each year after an initial grant is made. (SVP makes single-year grants but with the intent of establishing longer-term partnerships with investees. Grants typically range from \$40,000-\$60,000 per year and are combined with the contribution of volunteer time from partners.)

Ben Slivka joined the K-12 Grant Committee in 2002. “We were responsible for reviewing prospectuses, selecting organizations to submit full proposals and conducting due diligence.” One of the two grants made was to Seattle MESA, which helps students of color and female students prepare for college in math, engineering and science.

In spring 2003 Slivka became SVP’s “Lead Partner” for Seattle MESA. He acts as liaison between the nonprofit and the team of SVP partners who provide expert assistance in strategic planning, management coaching, budgeting, fundraising, technology, marketing and board development.

He also lends his own expertise. “SVP was helping Seattle MESA develop a new after-school, enhanced curriculum program for ninth graders at five local schools. Early on I sat down with [Executive Director] Anna-Maria de la Fuente to talk about business planning. She was very open to my recommendations. She wasn’t a pushover, though – she held us accountable to their mission and vision.”

Slivka reports that Seattle MESA now has “a concrete plan and budget for how it will expand incrementally.” Its outcome data is “striking”: 68 percent of MESA-enrolled ninth graders are earning at least a 3.0 grade point average versus 20 percent pre-MESA.

Slivka estimates he spent 50 hours with Seattle MESA in the first year of the project, 30 in the second and about 20 in the third. He’ll continue volunteering for the organization’s final two years in the SVP portfolio. “The decrease in volunteer hours reflects the capacity-building that’s happening. They need less of me because they’re more capable of doing it on their own.”

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Take time to learn what’s out there.** “One of the nice things about SVP is deal flow. Lisa and I have discovered great projects that SVP decided not to invest in, but which we give to through our family foundation,” says Slivka.
2. **Benefit from others’ knowledge and experience.** “If you can find an organization like SVP join it, because you can learn a lot quickly about what to look for in an organization and what kind of project is likely to be successful.” Donor and foundation networks are also good places to meet colleagues interested in similar issues, test ideas, learn about promising strategies and get counsel.
3. **Organization leadership is very important.** “Seattle MESA has benefited tremendously from the SVP investment and guidance because Anna-Maria has been eager to learn from SVP and apply our experience to strengthening and growing the Seattle MESA board, staff and programs.”

Scott Pearson

TIBURON, CA

TOOL: Technical assistance and board leadership of a charter school management organization

INVESTMENT: Approximately 25 hours per week and \$100,000 per year over four years

Scott Pearson’s education philanthropy began with a business proposition. “It was 1987. I was a management consultant in Boston, but felt I had been put on earth to do more than make money, or consult with people to help them make money.” He approached his employer about doing pro-bono work for The Corporate Community School of America, a Chicago-area precursor to charter schools. For six months Pearson worked half-time helping the organization develop its business plan.

“It was my first exposure to charter schools, and to the power of entrepreneurs to help create alternatives within the public school system. It infused me with the desire to do something public-service oriented.” He went back to school, obtaining degrees from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and the Harvard Business School.

The credentials served him well in positions as a U.S. trade negotiator and later at America Online. “My time with AOL was exciting but all-consuming. And though it made me financially independent, that same nagging feeling was there,” Pearson says.

Then, in 2001, he ran into Mark Kushner, a college friend, at a San Francisco Bay Area alumni event. “Mark told me he’d been running a charter high school that served low-income students. When he told me the school had the third-highest test scores in San Francisco and was sending 99 percent of its graduates to college, I was intrigued. When he told me about his vision to create schools throughout the Bay Area and eventually California, I was hooked.”

Pearson helped his friend create a financial model and business plan for a nonprofit organization that would manage its widening network of charter schools. On the strength of that plan, they obtained nearly a million dollars in seed funding from donors and foundations. In spring 2002, the Leadership Public Schools “charter management organization” was incorporated and Pearson became board chair. Their vision: open 25 schools in 10 years.

“We realized that if we were going to execute on our vision, we would go through the kind of hyper-growth I saw at AOL. And while I was a little wary of my own lack of experience in this arena, I knew Mark had the right characteristics for that environment: dedication, competence, flexibility and capacity for self-improvement.”

By fall 2006 Leadership Public Schools will have seven schools open throughout California, all focused on college preparation for kids from families where the college experience is new. Pearson volunteers about 25 hours per week, mostly on board management and fundraising. “I do a lot of interacting with major donors,” he says. His family also makes an annual financial contribution. “I’m influenced by New Tithing Group, which advocates donating to your maximum comfortably affordable giving capacity.”

Pearson acknowledges that his volunteer work can be as challenging as any “real job.” But he says simply, “besides spending time with my family, this is the most fulfilling thing I do.”

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Invest in people.** “When I got involved in Leadership Public Schools, I was not only getting involved in the idea of charter schools, I was getting involved with the people,” says Pearson. “With Mark, I realized this was someone I was comfortable casting my lot with.”

2. **Funding organizational infrastructure is vital.** “By far the most challenging piece for me as a fundraiser is finding support for the main office. A lot of people want to fund the schools and school openings, but not the management infrastructure that makes those openings happen. So I’m very conscious of that in my own giving.”

Strategic Grant Partners

BOSTON, MA

COMMITTED FUNDS: \$27 million

TOOL: Teacher training and preparation programs

INVESTMENT TO DATE: (Boston Teacher Residency Program) \$4.13 million over 4 years
(Lowell New Teacher Academy) \$1.48 million over 3 years

A former senior executive at corporations including Converse and Keds, Joanna Jacobson has a wealth of experience in planning, strategy and business turnarounds. In 2002 she decided to apply that experience to the nonprofit sector. “I’d been talking with a friend who runs a successful company and gives away a lot of money,” says Jacobson. “Many organizations he supported were asking him to share his expertise, but he just didn’t have the time. It got me thinking – what kind of vehicle would enable these donors to engage in problem-solving with organizations at a point of transformation?”

The vehicle was Strategic Grant Partners, now a coalition of 13 family foundations. Jacobson serves as its full-time managing director, a position that entails working directly with grantees to design and manage effective programs. Partners make a three-year funding commitment and contribute their own know-how in meetings.

“We believe private dollars should be deployed to demonstrate how systems can change, which involves supporting new ideas that haven’t received attention from the public sector,” states Jacobson. “At the same time, we recognize that public funding – especially in education – is necessary to sustain any effort. We always work in collaboration with school districts and other stakeholders.”

The coalition’s first education grant established a teacher residency program in partnership with Boston public schools. Recalls Jacobson: “We asked school leaders, ‘What’s a problem you can’t solve because you lack resources?’” They identified two related issues: the turnover rate among new teachers, and new teachers’ inability to teach effectively in an urban district. “Coming out of traditional programs, they had pedagogical knowledge but little practical experience. They weren’t familiar with the district’s curriculum, didn’t understand classroom management and just weren’t equipped to handle a diverse student body.”

Strategic Grant Partners hired a consultant – a charter school teacher who had piloted his own training program – to develop a business plan with Jacobson and the district. In

2003, coalition members approved a \$2.38 million grant to fund the start-up and first two years of the Boston Teacher Residency Program. In 2004 the coalition made a second grant of \$1.75 million for the program's third and fourth years.

The 13-month Boston Teacher Residency Program is modeled on a medical residency program. Residents spend four days a week in the classroom with trained mentor teachers, in conjunction with rigorous coursework. At the end of the program they have earned a Massachusetts Initial Teacher License, a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts/Boston and a job in the district.

The coalition's second major education grant came in 2005 to establish the Lowell New Teacher Academy. Says Jacobson: "Lowell's school district was eager to develop a program that would not only prepare new teachers, but train current teachers to be mentors. Lowell had a different set of issues from Boston, though – the district is much smaller and the demand for a separate program wasn't there."

The solution was a three-year program that serves all new teachers in Lowell, about 120 people each year. The school-based program offers mentoring and coaching, assistance in lesson planning and classroom management, and peer-to-peer evaluation as well as graduate course work.

Both grants are designed so that the coalition's investment becomes largely sustained through public funding. In Boston, for instance, the district's share of funding will rise from 25% in 2005-06 to 60% in 2007-08, and the program's director has secured other public dollars from AmeriCorps as well as significant grants from private foundations.

A guiding principle of Strategic Grant Partners is to be an integral part of a grantee's success by assisting with strategic planning, implementation, networking and generally watching over grants and ensuring that key stakeholders live up to their agreements.

"These two grants exemplify our approach," says Jacobson. "We've used private funding and collaboration to introduce a strategy to build a cadre of good teachers who are committed to teaching as a career."

What This Can Mean for Your Education Giving:

1. **Philanthropy is ideal for start-ups and scaling of promising programs.** "Existing bureaucracies move slowly, fight change and rarely release the dollars needed to run large scale tests of new ideas," says Jacobson. "After two to three years of initial results and greater scale, it's easier for districts to support change that is already proving successful."

2. **Use your leverage to bring other resources to bear on the problem.** “Donors should require all key stakeholders to put ‘skin in the game’, financial or otherwise, to ensure commitment. And stakeholders should always be at the table and in agreement on the objectives, approach and implementation plan.”
3. **Granting money is relatively easy; ensuring success is the tough work.** “Being available when unexpected issues and difficulties arise is key to substantive progress. Philanthropists should adopt hands-on partnership roles, helping grantees when troubles arise.”



7

SECTION

Results

What do I want to accomplish through my gift? What else do I want to learn through my giving? Why is this important to me?

Q: In terms of results, it's important that ...

... I know the projects or organizations I give to are using my money wisely.

... I see some kind of positive output from my dollars – for example, more students attending after-school enrichment programs.

... I see a positive change in student, school or district achievement – or example, improved test scores in a particular school.

... Lessons learned from the project are shared, even if the project didn't succeed.

... I'm willing to support projects that might not produce changes for many years, if I think there's potential for a real breakthrough.

... Your reasons: _____

CONSIDERATIONS

You may have heard the old saying, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there." That's a good attitude to have on a drive in the country ... but it doesn't work as a principle for gauging the results of your philanthropy.

One of most important things to ask yourself before making a gift is: "What do I want to accomplish through my gift?" A second question is: "What else do I want to learn through my giving?" A third is: "Why is this important to me?"

The general answer to Question 1 is probably, "I want some kind of measurable change in performance, behavior or a situation as a result of the intervention I supported." This could be anything from an increased grade point average among students in an after-school program to your state's adopting a new education funding priority. Or you may be seeking less quantifiable evidence of impact – for example, gauging the positive effects or learning from a project that didn't succeed, or tracing the long-term effects of efforts that don't bear immediate fruit, such as capacity-building or public awareness.

The answer to Question 2 might be as simple as "Who benefited?" For example, if you support an intervention for low-performing students, you might want to know what kinds of students received services and how

many completed the program. You might want to know *how* a project was implemented, what lessons were learned, and how the project could run better in the future. Or you may want to test *how much* an intervention really costs.

As for Question 3, you might have one or more of the following reasons: To hold an organization accountable to the money I've invested. To inform the beneficiary organization's program planning and improvement. To improve and focus my future contributions. To generate knowledge and tools for the field to improve practice and policy and spread change.

We believe those "whys" are compelling, and merit some level of evaluation on most gifts. We also recognize that, depending on what you're trying to learn, it can be expensive, time-consuming or technically difficult.

But it isn't always so. In many cases, good planning and communication up front will enable beneficiaries and partners to answer the following questions at the back end:

What did we do? (quantitative)

For example: Whom did we serve? What activities did we undertake? What tools or knowledge did we produce?

How well did we do it? (qualitative)

How was the project implemented? How much did it cost? Did the project meet its goals and objectives? Why or why not? Were stakeholders satisfied with their participation? Besides actual results, were there other things worth learning?

Is anyone better off? (effectiveness)

What were the outcomes of our work? Did our investment improve the well-being of those we were trying to work with?

As part of that good planning, consider the following questions: Given the size and purpose of my contribution, is it reasonable to ask beneficiaries to spend time recording, monitoring and reporting on results? Am I willing to provide extra money for information to be generated and analyzed? Will I accept data generated for other funders?

What do you want to learn from your giving? Why is it important to you?



Make a Difference: *Consider These 7 Critical Needs in K-12 Education*

While everyone has a stake in improved public schools, it's sometimes difficult to know how to make a difference – and where to begin making contributions that address important needs or accelerate change.

As a place to start, we encourage you to consider the following seven areas of critical needs for education philanthropy, which are based on the facts presented in our accompanying **Primer** on the U.S. education system. These areas represent places where needs are greatest or where research suggests that added focus can make a difference in student outcomes – and thus where philanthropic investments might leverage bigger changes:

- 1. Since racial, ethnic, and income-based achievement gaps between students are not closing fast enough, and since U.S. students are behind students from several other nations in science and math...**

Support efforts and school designs aimed at both closing achievement gaps and raising overall student performance.

2. Since high-quality preschool experiences and in-home reading experiences can help mitigate the effects of poverty and other social drains on achievement...

Expand high-quality preschool programs and efforts that encourage students and parents to read at home.

3. Since black, Latino, and low-income students – the groups with the most significant achievement gaps – tend to be concentrated in urban areas...

Target reforms on inner-city schools.

4. Since the percentages of immigrants and English language learners is growing...

Focus on ways to help students learn English quickly and well while ensuring they master academic subjects.

5. Since decision-making authority in education is shifting more to the state and federal levels...

Support advocacy efforts – including well-targeted research, communications efforts, or community engagement activities – to change public opinion and to influence and improve federal and state education policies.

6. Since teachers need more training in the subjects they teach and better incentives to stay in the profession and teach in schools with the greatest needs...

Support programs and strategies that strengthen teacher skills and content knowledge, especially in high-poverty and high-minority schools, and support innovative approaches to improving teacher pay and providing incentives for the most qualified.

7. Since dropout rates have not improved, especially for Latino and urban students...

Support efforts that encourage students to stay in school and take courses that are both relevant and put them on a track to college.

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